

This is the third time, during a span of six years, that it has been my pleasure to appear before the World Health Assembly as a member of the delegation from the United States.

Since this is so, perhaps the delegates from some of our sister nations know that I am a member of Congress of the United States House of Representatives, that I have served in that body for nearly 24 years as a representative of the people of Rhode Island, and that one of my principal fields of interest as a legislator is the health and welfare activities of the government of the United States.

Perhaps the delegates do not know, however, that part of my preparation for this elective office was service as a member of one of the important laboring groups in the United States. Specifically, I was engaged in that work which involves the building of structures through the use of bricks. I am proud of my laboring origin and of everything that gives testimonial to the dignity of the laboring man. And I am sure you will understand why I find parallels between building with bricks and the building processes that are involved in developing a policy of government or constructing a program for world health.

As I have watched, and taken part in, and to a degree helped shape the health and welfare programs of the government

of the United States, I have been increasingly aware of the opportunities the field of health affords for meaningful demonstrations of the brotherhood of man and for positive cooperation among governments and peoples in the interest of world health and world peace. This is, of course, not a new thought for this forum; indeed, the World Health Organization and this Assembly are founded on this concept and on the conviction that it can be put to work through mutual faith and coordinated action.

My specific purpose in asking to address the delegates has to do with a new medical and public health program that can, and I believe should be, pursued vigorously.

One of the rewarding things about my responsibilities in Congress is the opportunity it affords for me to keep abreast of promising developments in health research and to help assure that no reasonable steps to apply the fruits of research are denied because of lack of interest or lack of support. It was in the late 1950's that my committee first heard with interest of outstanding research done by the distinguished scientist at Harvard University, Dr. John Enders, and his associates, in connection with the virus that is the cause of measles. Dr. Enders and his colleagues had already received the Nobel Prize for their work in the virus and tissue culture fields. They made another significant contribution when they

identified the measles virus, established that it can be grown in a culture medium, developed an experimental measles vaccine, and tested it with satisfactory results.

From this point forward, events unfolded swiftly and in a manner that is characteristic of scientific development in the United States. The problem was to confirm Dr. Enders' results, further test and develop the vaccine, gain assurance of its safety and effectiveness in large population groups, and make the product available in volume sufficient to meet the national need. In meeting this challenge, there has been fine collaboration on the part of our government, the medical school and university world, and the pharmaceutical industry. Measles vaccines have been tested widely both in U.S. and in foreign populations. As a result, just two months ago, the Surgeon General of the U.S. Public Health Service--Dr. Luther Terry, who is here in Geneva as the head of the U.S. Delegation--announced that measles vaccines had been licensed by our government.....one involving/^alive but weakened form of the virus, and one involving use of the virus in a killed form, and both yielding substantial protection against the disease.

As the delegates to this Assembly know, measles is a much more important health problem than is commonly understood by the general public. In our country, in addition to the hazards of the disease itself, we are deeply concerned with the complications that may ensue--complications such as encephalitis and

mental retardation. But the disease itself causes between 400 and 500 deaths a year in the United States, and I am pleased to report that already more than a million doses of measles vaccine have been used in our country since the vaccine was licensed.....indicating that measles will soon join the ever-growing list of diseases that have been effectively controlled by the use of preventive agents.

The arena of medicine and public health is cooperative, not competitive; but I point out with some pride that the development of the measles vaccine--from the original creative research of Dr. Enders all the way to the availability in quantity of a safe and effective product--is from start to finish a unique story of success in our own country's research and development processes and in the relationships of our private to our public sector.

The delegates to this Assembly know better than I the degree to which disease patterns vary from country to country. Important though it is, measles can be considered "minor" in the United States as compared with such great killers and cripplers as heart disease, cancer, and mental illness. But in certain of our sister nations--particularly those of the African continent, Latin America, and Southeast Asia--measles is a problem with grave dimensions, with high mortality rates. There is already ample evidence that in those countries, too, the measles vaccine can and should be used to stamp out the ravages of this disease.

I recall with pleasure seeing, for example, a copy of remarks made by the Minister of Health of the Upper Volta in connection with the large scale study of measles vaccination carried out by a demonstration team from the U.S. Public Health Service, using vaccine donated by a U.S. pharmaceutical firm. Nearly three-quarters of a million children of the Upper Volta were given measles vaccine. The Minister of Health estimates that many lives may already have been saved by this experiment in mass immunization--and that lives numbering hundreds of thousands may be saved over a period of years throughout the world if the vaccine is used continuously among susceptible population groups.

I am sure that the World Health Organization is fully aware of this new development and that its expert panels are now considering how it can be used to the optimum benefit of the public health around the world. My message is simply one of urgency. Unfortunately, advances of this kind come only infrequently. When they do come, it is of vital importance that they be immediately and widely implemented. I call upon this Assembly and the World Health Organization to do everything possible to speed the use of measles vaccine widely among those countries where measles is a most important public health problem.

Although I am a legislator, I am not unaware of the practical difficulties of undertaking large-scale medical and public health

programs. It is my view that as the creator of this new weapon for the conquest of disease, my country has special responsibilities to see that it is used wisely and well.....responsibilities that do not end with our national boundaries, but extend to the four corners of the earth. To this end, I also call upon the appropriate governmental agencies of the United States, and particularly the Agency for International Development and the U.S. Public Health Service, to give every possible cooperation to the World Health Organization and its regional groups, to UNICEF, and to individual nations in fostering the use of measles vaccine.

I understand that some efforts are already being made in this respect.....that further demonstrations and clinical trials are being planned, that training of teams in the techniques of mass immunization is contemplated, that work is going forward in an effort to assure an ample supply of the vaccine for the world's needs. These are heartening developments.

But in my judgment the effort should be doubled and redoubled, so that there will be no unnecessary time lag between the discovery of this new vaccine and its use wherever measles is a problem.

I pledge you the full cooperation and support of my country in achieving this goal.

#